

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS AMMAN 003989

SIPDIS

PASS TDA FOR STEINGASS/SIGLER  
USDOC 4520/ITA/MAC/ONE/PTANOS  
E STAFF FOR CADE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ECPS](#) [EAID](#) [JO](#) [XF](#)

SUBJECT: ARAB TELECOM REGULATORS INITIATIVE

1. (SBU) Telecommunications Regulatory Commission chief Muna Nijem approached USAID director and Econ Couns on June 30 about U.S. Government support for an effort she is leading to create a network of Arab telecommunications regulators. Nijem said the idea to create a network was developed during a regional ITU conference in Algeria earlier this year. Jordan will organize an initial, organizational meeting in Amman August 28. (Algeria has the regional ITU chair for 2003, which Jordan will take over in 2004.)

2. (SBU) According to Nijem, the network will be a resource for the development of pro-competitive, consumer-focused telecom regulation in the region. She said it would address issues including how operators negotiate compatible licenses across borders and regional numbering concerns. In addition to helping regulators operate more efficiently, Nijem said that the rationale for the initiative was to increase regional economic and political cooperation.

3. (SBU) Nijem asked for assistance prior to the late August meeting in pulling together ideas for how a network could operate. Basically, this would mean bringing in one outside consultant for a one-month period to prepare an agenda for the meeting. Her initial thoughts included creating a web-based "virtual" system for sharing ideas among network members as well as periodic workshops and seminars. A network might also pool resources to bring in outside experts to address regional needs. Nijem expected that once the August meeting had agreed on a general vision, the group would commission a full-blown study of how a network would operate. She thought that organizations like the World Bank or TDA would be asked to help fund this longer-term study.

4. (SBU) Comment: USAID Amman will look into the feasibility of bringing in a short-term consultant to help Nijem prepare for the August meeting. Post suggests that possibilities for longer-term support for this initiative under MEPI and by TDA be studied closely. Following the recent acquisition of Jordan's "Fastlink" mobile operator by Kuwait's MTC, and MTC's partnership with Vodafone in Bahrain, plus Orascom's expansion in Egypt and North Africa and the various possibilities in Iraq, the outlines of a regional mobile network are emerging. By encouraging greater connectivity within the region and between the region and the rest of the world, this initiative would fit perfectly with our broader economic goals for the region, particularly MEFTA. Nijem herself is a forward-leaning, former Motorola executive who favors U.S. technology and is among the most senior women in the Jordanian government.

GNEHM